

May 6, 2003

Kim R. Burningham, President  
Utah State Board of Education  
932 Canyon Crest Drive  
Bountiful, Utah 84010

Dear Kim,

It has been a while since I have communicated with you. Even so, I have followed the proceedings of the Utah State Board of Education. I am impressed at the exceptional progress achieved through the revised draft prepared by the Board, April 12, 2002. I am pleased to forward the appreciation of President Kristen Davidson and the Board of Utah Association for Career and Technical Education (UACTE).

In Utah there more than 3,000 applied technology educators and since the passage of Utah S. B. 154 Public Education Amendments, there have been many concerns expressed about future high school students whose education/career pathways are tied to applied technology education. Representing UACTE, I will address some specific issues, but please understand that UACTE members are pleased with the State School Board's emphasis upon competency-based education, challenging courses for all subject areas, and establishing the Student Education Occupation Plan process as the vehicle verifying student progress in the core competencies and in the selecting and customizing for students the "area of focus" electives.

Relative to our concerns, there are some sections in the draft proposal where phrases are unclear and where other phrases appear conflicting in direction. The following represents some specific examples:

## **I. Graduation Units**

Draft Proposal states

- |             |    |  |
|-------------|----|--|
| Line 28     | A. | Diplomas will be awarded to students accumulating 18 graduation units. . . .   |
| Lines 62-64 | C. | (Note: Institutions of higher education may have additional entrance requirements. Students and their parents or guardians are responsible for becoming aware of, and meeting those entrance requirements. |
| Lines 79-80 | E. | Because local autonomy is precious and reflected in local schedules and graduation requirements, districts and charter schools may exceed the 18 graduation units specified, . . . .                       |

Association Recommendation:

- A. Diplomas *may* be awarded to students accumulating 18 graduation units, *nevertheless local boards' of education may exceed the state required 18 graduation units specified upon the conditions listed in E.*

Additionally, when or if local school boards exceed the state required 18 graduation units, it is imperative

that added local courses for graduation and the added courses to meet entrance requirements for higher education receive funding from the state.

## **II. Balanced Curriculum and Demonstrated Competencies**

Draft Proposal states

Line 21-23 The proposal will:

- a. "Raise the bar" so that all students will graduate with core curriculum competency
- b. Focus on core academics and maintain a balanced curriculum

Association Concerns:

"Every child should be able to read, write, compute and have technology skills. For students who are at-risk for a variety of reasons, including learning disabilities, phobias, social or emotional problems and do not qualify for special education, this becomes very costly." *Scott Tennis, Principal Viewmont High School*

"More students may drop out of high school without Career and Technical Education." *Gene Bottoms, senior vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board*

A balanced curriculum of academic core and rigorous electives in various education/career pathways are essential elements. Students perform better and stay in school when they believe their course work is relevant to their future endeavors. *Utah Association for Career and Technical Education*

Association Recommendations:

- a. Aside from the required 3 units in the "area of focus," require 2 additional units in the area of "exploratory" electives which have a criterion of rigorous standards.
- b. Allow through the SEOP process and approval by a school building advisory board, alternative education pathways for students, who after prudent remediation, are unable to meet the core requirements. A "pathway training certificate" could be issued in place of graduate diplomas.
- c. Along with Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) in the core curriculum areas, develop-- where not currently available--Skill Certification Tests for state approved elective courses. An example is found in Applied Technology Education where there are more than 100 developed Skill Certification Tests in specific career preparation pathways.

## **III. Exit Competencies**

Draft Proposal states

Lines 50, 55 These competencies will be equivalent to:  
Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or other advanced science course (1.0)

Association Recommendation:

Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Principles of Technology, Medical Anatomy & Physiology or other advanced science course (1.0)

With Best Regards,

Rod Crockett, Legislative Chair  
Utah Association for Career and Technical Education